

# News

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Philadelphia, Pa. 19106

Internet address: <http://www.bls.gov/ro3/home.htm>

INFORMATION: Gerald Perrins  
(215) 597-3282

MEDIA CONTACT: Sheila Watkins  
(215) 861-5600

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## **WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE RETAIL FOOD, ENERGY, AND SHELTER PRICE INDEXES: APRIL 2003**

Food at home and energy prices fell in the Washington-Baltimore Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA), while shelter prices rose in April, as measured by the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), the United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Sheila Watkins, the Bureau's regional commissioner, noted that the 12-month decline in the food at home index was the first over-the-year drop since December 1998.

Food at home prices edged down 0.2 percent in April following a 1.1 percent decline in March. Lower prices for pork chops, tomatoes, and other fresh vegetables, among others, were nearly offset by higher prices for a number of items including citrus fruits, lettuce, and baby food. Food at home prices were 1.1 percent below year-ago levels.

The Washington-Baltimore area food at home index was 109.0 on the December 1997=100 base, which means that grocery shoppers in the Washington-Baltimore area would have had to spend \$10.90 last month for a market basket of food items that cost \$10.00 in December 1997.

Following three consecutive months of increases totaling 14.0 percent, the energy index fell 2.4 percent over the month due to broad-based declines in its components. Natural gas prices dropped 8.4 percent in April after a 29.3 percent jump in March. Due to increases in 7 of the last 12 months, natural gas prices were 30.4 percent higher than last April. Following three straight months of increases totaling 17.5 percent, gasoline prices fell 1.9 percent since March, but were 16.0 percent higher over the last 12 months. Fuel oil and electricity prices were also down in April. Electricity prices inched down 0.1 percent, and were 1.2 percent below year-ago levels. The overall energy index was up 12.3 percent over the year.

The Washington-Baltimore energy index stood at 121.3 on the November 1996 base, which means that energy users in the Washington-Baltimore area would have spent \$12.13 last month for a group of energy items that cost \$10.00 in November 1996.

The shelter index, which includes rent of primary residence, owners' equivalent rent of primary residence, lodging away from home, and tenants' and household insurance, rose for the seventh consecutive month, up 0.5 percent since March. Rent of primary residence and owners' equivalent rent of primary residence both increased 0.3 percent in April and had over-the-year increases of 5.4 percent and 4.9 percent, respectively. The overall shelter index was up 5.3 percent over the year.

NOTE: Local area indexes are by-products of the national CPI program. Because each local index is a small subset of the national index, it has a smaller sample size and is therefore subject to substantially more sampling and other measurement error than the national index. As a result, area indexes show greater volatility than the national index, although their long-term trends are quite similar. Short-term changes in local indexes may reflect strictly seasonal influences.

Table 1. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Washington-Baltimore, DC-MD-VA-WV (December 1997=100 unless otherwise noted)

Expenditure category	Indexes			Percent change from-		
	Feb. 2003	Mar. 2003	Apr. 2003	Apr. 2002	Feb. 2003	Mar. 2003
All items (1).....	-	115.9	-	-	-	-
Food and beverages (1).....	-	112.7	-	-	-	-
Food (1).....	-	112.7	-	-	-	-
Food at home .....	110.4	109.2	109.0	-1.1	-1.3	-0.2
Food away from home (2).....	-	115.2	-	-	-	-
Alcoholic beverages (2).....	-	110.1	-	-	-	-
Housing (1).....	-	120.8	-	-	-	-
Shelter .....	123.7	124.2	124.8	5.3	.9	.5
Rent of primary residence (1) (3).....	128.6	129.3	129.7	5.4	.9	.3
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence (3).....	122.3	122.8	123.2	4.9	.7	.3
Fuels and utilities .....	-	114.8	-	-	-	-
Fuels .....	105.7	114.1	110.8	8.4	4.8	-2.9
Gas (piped) and electricity (3).....	102.7	110.7	107.8	6.4	5.0	-2.6
Electricity (3).....	98.2	98.4	98.3	-1.2	.1	-.1
Utility natural gas service (3).....	118.4	153.1	140.2	30.4	18.4	-8.4
Household furnishings and operations .....	-	108.7	-	-	-	-
Apparel (1).....	-	89.7	-	-	-	-
Transportation (1).....	-	110.7	-	-	-	-
Private transportation .....	-	110.4	-	-	-	-
Motor fuel .....	135.7	142.0	139.3	16.1	2.7	-1.9
Gasoline (all types) .....	135.7	142.0	139.3	16.0	2.7	-1.9
Gasoline, unleaded regular (4).....	136.5	143.5	140.7	16.6	3.1	-2.0
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade (4).....	134.8	140.9	137.8	15.2	2.2	-2.2
Gasoline, unleaded premium (4).....	134.2	138.7	136.6	14.6	1.8	-1.5
Medical care (1).....	-	117.6	-	-	-	-
Recreation .....	-	111.4	-	-	-	-
Education and communication .....	-	113.1	-	-	-	-
Other goods and services (1).....	-	134.5	-	-	-	-
Commodity and service group						
Commodities .....	-	108.3	-	-	-	-
Commodities less food and beverages .....	-	105.7	-	-	-	-
Nondurables less food and beverages .....	-	114.1	-	-	-	-
Durables .....	-	95.6	-	-	-	-
Services .....	-	120.9	-	-	-	-
Special aggregate indexes						
All items less medical care (1).....	-	115.8	-	-	-	-
All items less shelter .....	-	111.8	-	-	-	-
Commodities less food .....	-	105.9	-	-	-	-
Nondurables .....	-	112.9	-	-	-	-
Nondurables less food .....	-	113.8	-	-	-	-
Services less rent of shelter .....	-	117.4	-	-	-	-
Services less medical care services .....	-	121.4	-	-	-	-
Energy (1).....	117.1	124.3	121.3	12.3	3.6	-2.4
All items less energy .....	-	114.9	-	-	-	-
All items less food and energy (1).....	-	116.1	-	-	-	-

1 For Washington-Baltimore, index is on a November 1996=100 base.

2 For Washington-Baltimore, index is on a November 1997=100 base.

3 This index series was calculated using a Laspeyres estimator. All other item stratum index series converted to a geometric means estimator in January, 1999.

4 Special index based on a substantially smaller sample.

- Data not available.

NOTE: Index applies to a month as a whole, not to any specific date.

Table 2. Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W):Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Washington-Baltimore, DC-MD-VA-WV (December 1997=100 unless otherwise noted)

Expenditure category	Indexes			Percent change from-		
	Feb. 2003	Mar. 2003	Apr. 2003	Apr. 2002	Feb. 2003	Mar. 2003
All items (1).....	-	115.5	-	-	-	-
Food and beverages (1).....	-	112.6	-	-	-	-
Food (1).....	-	112.6	-	-	-	-
Food at home .....	111.0	109.8	109.6	-0.3	-1.3	-0.2
Food away from home (2).....	-	115.2	-	-	-	-
Alcoholic beverages (2).....	-	110.6	-	-	-	-
Housing (1).....	-	120.7	-	-	-	-
Shelter .....	123.9	124.5	125.0	5.1	.9	.4
Rent of primary residence (1) (3).....	128.4	129.2	129.6	5.5	.9	.3
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence (3).....	121.9	122.4	122.8	5.0	.7	.3
Fuels and utilities .....	-	111.0	-	-	-	-
Fuels .....	103.7	109.9	108.1	6.5	4.2	-1.6
Gas (piped) and electricity (3).....	102.0	107.9	106.4	5.6	4.3	-1.4
Electricity (3).....	98.2	98.3	98.3	-1.0	.1	.0
Utility natural gas service (3).....	119.9	152.8	144.2	33.9	20.3	-5.6
Household furnishings and operations .....	-	106.1	-	-	-	-
Apparel (1).....	-	91.6	-	-	-	-
Transportation (1).....	-	110.2	-	-	-	-
Private transportation .....	-	110.1	-	-	-	-
Motor fuel .....	135.7	142.0	139.0	15.8	2.4	-2.1
Gasoline (all types) .....	135.7	141.9	139.0	15.7	2.4	-2.0
Gasoline, unleaded regular (4).....	136.7	143.5	140.4	16.3	2.7	-2.2
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade (4).....	134.8	140.8	137.5	15.0	2.0	-2.3
Gasoline, unleaded premium (4).....	134.0	138.6	136.3	14.4	1.7	-1.7
Medical care (1).....	-	116.6	-	-	-	-
Recreation .....	-	107.9	-	-	-	-
Education and communication .....	-	110.8	-	-	-	-
Other goods and services (1).....	-	144.8	-	-	-	-
Commodity and service group						
Commodities .....	-	109.6	-	-	-	-
Commodities less food and beverages .....	-	108.1	-	-	-	-
Nondurables less food and beverages .....	-	119.9	-	-	-	-
Durables .....	-	95.7	-	-	-	-
Services .....	-	120.4	-	-	-	-
Special aggregate indexes						
All items less medical care (1).....	-	115.4	-	-	-	-
All items less shelter .....	-	111.6	-	-	-	-
Commodities less food .....	-	108.3	-	-	-	-
Nondurables .....	-	115.4	-	-	-	-
Nondurables less food .....	-	119.1	-	-	-	-
Services less rent of shelter .....	-	115.8	-	-	-	-
Services less medical care services .....	-	120.7	-	-	-	-
Energy (1).....	116.6	122.7	120.4	11.6	3.3	-1.9
All items less energy .....	-	114.4	-	-	-	-
All items less food and energy (1).....	-	115.5	-	-	-	-

1 For Washington-Baltimore, index is on a November 1996=100 base.

2 For Washington-Baltimore, index is on a November 1997=100 base.

3 This index series was calculated using a Laspeyres estimator. All other item stratum index series converted to a geometric means estimator in January, 1999.

4 Special index based on a substantially smaller sample.

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NOTE: Index applies to a month as a whole, not to any specific date.